

How Nixon helped dairy contributors

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Shortly after he was promised \$2 million in campaign contributions from the dairy industry, President Nixon imposed import quotas on ice cream, cheese and other dairy products.

The promise was made in a letter to Nixon on Dec. 16, 1970, which also requested action on the quotas.

"We write you both as advocates and supporters," wrote Patrick J. Hillings, lawyer for the Associated Milk Producers, Inc.

"This time is ripe politically and economically to impose the recommended quotas. All that is necessary is a simple proclamation..."

Nixon issued that proclamation on Dec. 31, 1970, just 15 days after the letter was sent. The Associated Press disclosed the existence of the letter Monday and later obtained a copy of it.

The White House and Hillings were asked for comment on the matter. Neither responded.

Hillings is a former Republican congressman from Nixon's old district in California. After leaving Congress he joined the Washington law firm of Murray Chotier, a long-time Nixon political associate. He handled the business of the milk organization for the law firm. He has since left the firm and is now in California.

"This letter discusses a matter of some delicacy and of significant political impact," Hillings wrote Nixon.

Hillings said milk producers had "followed our advice explicitly and will do so in the future. AMPI contributed \$135,000 to Republican candidates in the 1970 election."

He then said the dairy group was working to set up channels "for AMPI to contribute \$2 million for your re-election."



PATRICK J. HILLINGS
Won import quotas

In the next paragraph, Hillings brought up the matter of quotas. He noted that the U.S. Tariff Commission had urged imposition of the quotas on Sept. 21, 1970, nearly three months earlier. "No presidential proclamation has been issued," he noted.

"The problem is this. The dairy industry cannot understand why these recommendations were not implemented very quickly. The longest the Democrats ever took to implement a Tariff Commission dairy recommendation was 16 days."

He complained of low federal price supports for farm goods, and said, "Farmers generally are unhappy with the economy. You know our farmbelt losses in the election."

The quotas Nixon imposed limit imports of ice cream, low-fat cheese, certain chocolate products and certain animal feeds containing milk or milk products.

The President's action on quotas came less than three months before a controversial administration decision to increase the level of federal price supports on milk.

Public interest groups are suing the administration over that price boost, contending that it was a payoff to the dairy industry for more than \$400,000 in campaign contributions that began to flow into the Nixon campaign three days before the increase was announced.